101 Example: Those of Bélédougou are the Bélédugu-ka-u;
Those of Kaarta are the Kaarta-n-ka-u;
Those of Ségou are the Ségu-n-ka-u ...

Each of these expressions has at the same time a political significance. Ségu-n-ka-u means the people of the party in power at Ségou. The context alone determines which people are meant.

[2] Among themselves, the Bambara factions sometimes [552] call each other by nicknames: of the people of Ségou, the people of Kaarta say ironically, "those of Tu-kolo-u" (those of the single braid), alluding to their coiffure, or else Nya-ni-nyele-u, "those of Nya and Nyélé" (Nya and Nyélé are women's names common at Ségou). All the members of a clan may also be grouped under a term derived from the name of the founder or ancestor of the clan: the people of Kaarta may call themselves Nya-Ngolo-la (the people of Nya-Ngolo, ancestor of the clan); the people of Ségou may be called Barama-Ngolo-la (the people of Barama-Ngolo, ancestor of the clan).

There are also nicknames for individuals of other tribes. [186] The Bambara are called Dyonko (slaves) by the Soninké, who long exploited the Bambara for the slave trade, while the Bambara in turn call the Soninké the Marka Dialan'u (Marka Seer), because they gave up their own dialect for the Bambara dialect.

II. Situation

A. Ethnic Classification

144 Delafosse has made a broad classification of the peoples inhabiting Upper Senegal and Niger. Unfortunately, this classification too often mixes language and physical traits. Thus, he puts the Bambara in the Mandé family, which is divided into three groups comprised of these main peoples:

First group (northern): three peoples, the Bozo, the Soninké (or Sarakolé or Marka), and the Dioula.

Second group (central): five peoples, the Kagoro, the Banmana (or Bambara, including the Somono caste), the Kassonké (or Mandingue [Mandingo]), and the Foulanké.

[88] with honey water and milk. They go to the public square, the only ballroom known in Bambara country. The big boys, their heads freshly shaved and their bodies thoroughly greased and all shining, also arrive in a long line, and in the square there is nothing but indescribable bedlam, for all these people at once greet each other, talk and shout, and not a voice is in harmony.

[82] Young and old consult the canopy of stars, for although they are not astronomers they know that around midnight a certain star of the firmament is at such and such an angle, and they are impatient. Then the hour has come, and the male soli are crouched in the place of honor, and the young lady soli arrive in single file, their hair in disorder and their hips girded with paltry loincloths that reach from the knees up to the navel. The loincloths are gifts from the fiancé [292] of each one, and must be worn. Their colors vary, indicating the tribe and caste of each girl, so one can see that they are of some importance (1).

1. The Moslems have blue. The pure Bambara wants a yellow background with black rose shapes and lines.

[186] A Bambara woman is proud of her blood and proud of her tribe, and, wearing her loincloth in the national colors, a narrow cloth band of black stripes on a yellow background, she almost thinks she is a queen, if not a goddess, at the soli si. The girls' gait reflects this feeling: with heads high, eyes 15 paces ahead, chests stuck out like Prussians (they puff themselves up a little to bring out their charms), they admire themselves and are enraptured, each knowing that she is the focus of more than one shining eye full of desire. They advance slowly, raising a cloud of dust, and in her hands each one shakes a bag of goatskin and an iron box filled with little pebbles; her torso bends to the left and bends to the right. In the dark of the night as the little fires /179/ cast their gleams here and there, one might say that they are frail shells lost in the waves and tossed by the winds, struck by the swell and always ready to capsize.